

WASHINGTON, DC--Today, Congressman Blumenauer (D-OR) testified before the House Committee on Government Reform Subcommittee on the District of Columbia, at a hearing entitled, "Spring Valley Revisited--The Status of the Cleanup of Contaminated Sites in Spring Valley." At the hearing today, the subcommittee reviewed the findings of the General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation and report that was requested last year on the cleanup of contaminated sites in the Spring Valley area of Northwest Washington, DC. The report was asked to determine, among other things, the possible health risks, the effectiveness of the Army Corps of Engineers' ongoing efforts and what will be necessary in both time and funds for a total cleanup.

"The situation that exists at Spring Valley today should force us to give the overall problem the attention it deserves," said Blumenauer. "Across the nation, tens of millions of acres are contaminated by the toxic consequences of military activities. The one risk in that toxic legacy that most urgently needs to be addressed is unexploded ordnance (UXO)--the bombs and shells that did not go off as intended and subsequently litter the landscape and put people at risk. Some 2000 Formerly Used Defense Sites and closed bases are contaminated with UXO. No one is really in charge of dealing with the problem and there is not adequate funding to address it."

As a component of his support for the role the military can play in promoting livable communities, Congressman Blumenauer has undertaken a national effort to address the problems of waste left behind on formerly used defense sites. There is a legacy of former bases, arsenals, and training ranges from Martha's Vineyard to Camp Bonneville in metropolitan Portland contaminated with UXO. An April 2001 General Accounting Office report cites Department of Defense estimates showing that DOD's liability for training range cleanup alone could exceed \$100 billion. At the current rate of spending, UXO cleanup will take over seventy-five years.

Blumenauer has introduced a free-standing bill, H.R. 2605, the Ordnance and Explosives Risk Management Act, laying out policy guidelines for dealing with UXO. The key provisions of H.R. 2605's sections were included in the FY02 and FY03 Defense Authorizations. Requests for additional funding for research & development and cleanup are pending in the Military Construction and Defense Appropriations bills.

Portions of the Spring Valley neighborhood were once used by military personnel assigned to the former American University Experiment Station from 1917 - 1919, to conduct research and testing on World War I chemical warfare materials.